

872 Youngster got a mastery of the letters. Then he was taught to read and write short sentences on cadjan leaves (*Ola Eshutah*). He was made to commit to memory short verses, and lessons in arithmetic were added to his curriculum. Thus the youngster acquired a fair knowledge of reading, writing, and arithmetic, in about two years, and was thereafter recommended to an advanced course of studies, which consisted of a study of Sanskrit, the perusal of the *Purānas*, and also arithmetic sufficient to enable him to calculate the position of planets and help him in the casting of horoscopes. Girls also were taught reading, writing, arithmetic, and singing, and were encouraged in the reading of the *Purānas*. Such in brief was the course of instruction imparted in these small institutions.

772 The schools were flimsy sheds with little or no furniture, while the boys sat on small mats or on the floor, which was covered with sand for purposes of writing. The teacher had a raised seat from which he supervised and listened to the loud recitations of the lessons set on the previous evenings. The boys went to him, one by one, repeated their lesson, and received another written by him on the palm leaf, which was to be learnt during the day. The school hours were generally from seven to ten in the morning and again from two to five in the afternoon. During the latter hours, the budding scholars were instructed in the reading of the Ramayana and other *Puranas*; and before the end of the lessons for the day, the boys were made to repeat with one voice, some mathematical formula. At home, the boys revised their work and recited the names of Gods and short verses as prayers to them. They had no work for about 12 days in the month, besides the usual Hindu holidays. 275 Twice during the month, when the fortnightly holidays commenced, i. e., on *Duddesi* (the 12th day after the full or new moon), the teacher was remunerated by each boy with the payment of an anna or two, and even this was sometimes evaded by the opportune absention of some pupils. He also received presents of cloth with a rupee or two from some of the richer families to which a few of his pupils belonged. Boys were subjected to a rigorous course of discipline; caning was freely resorted to as a mode of correction, and the teacher was often regarded with terror rather than with respect and admiration. Their only books were manuscripts on cadjan leaves; their

only training was the training of the memory, and the learned pedagogue never bestowed a thought on cultivating the thinking powers or the originality of his pupils. But this type of school and school-master is fast disappearing under the modern regime of elementary schools.

Next in importance to the school-master is the Kaniyan, an indispensable factor in the affairs and ceremonies of the village.¹

Then come the artisan classes whose services are necessary in the construction of houses, and the making of implements of agriculture. They were paid for their work either in kind or in coin.

The other men of importance in the village economic life were the physician, the village washerman, and the village barber. The village physician was a man of parts; for, not only did he tend the sick and the ailing, but also cast out devils from persons possessed, and with the aid of well prepared charms guarded them from the effects of the evil eye. The village washermen were of the Veluthédan and the Mannán caste. The services of the former were always requisitioned when people wished to become free from pollution, an act the omission of which leads to outcasting.

The village barber is another indispensable factor in the village ceremony and is employed for the shaving before all ceremonies. His privileges cannot be encroached upon by his own caste-men from other villages.

The village organisation above described is preserved to a certain extent even now and most probably the Kaniyan's profession will survive all other relics of Hindu institutions, as his services are considered to be of essential importance in matters of every day life.

The ordinary games pursued by the young men of the village are the foot-ball matches, *Attakalam*, *Kayyāmkali*, and *Kaikottikkali* (a favourite circular dance of the women), *Ushinjāl* and others, while cards and chess are common enough on festive occasions. Cock-fighting is an interesting pastime among the lower classes.

The most important of the village pastimes are the dramatic performances, a description of which is given in the following pages. The drama in Malabar sprang into being in

1. Vide my account of the Kaniyans, Vol. I, Chap. XI, pages 190-93.